

like a folk song

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/26522434) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/26522434>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	Gen , M/M
Fandoms:	魔道祖师 - 墨香铜臭 Módào Zǔshī - Mòxiāng Tóngxiù , 陈情令 The Untamed (TV)
Relationship:	Lan Zhan Lan Wangji/Wei Ying Wei Wuxian
Characters:	Lan Zhan Lan Wangji , Wei Ying Wei Wuxian , Lan Yuan Lan Sizhui , Lan Jingyi , Ouyang Zizhen
Additional Tags:	Napping , Family Feels , extremely soft , Post-Canon
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2020-09-18 Words: 4,312 Chapters: 1/1

like a folk song

by [norgbelulah](#)

Summary

Lan Sizhui returns to Cloud Recesses. He doesn't want to see anyone else until he sees his two favorite people.

Notes

I was greatly inspired to write this fic by theLoyalRoyalGuard's [lovely thread](#) about every MDZS character taking naps. Nap fic is a thing we need more of, imo. So here is one where a tiny family snooze together and have deep feelings and tender conversations.

This, I believe, will fit continuity-wise with both CQL and novel canon, though I am much more familiar with the former.

Please enjoy!

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

It feels a little strange to be home.

There are junior disciples on gate duty when Sizhui passes through who he has taught how to hold a sword. They were his first class as an instructor, but he feels old now and it sits uneasily across his shoulders as he comes home for the first time in over a year of wandering. One of the guards smiles at him brightly and the other blushes when he invokes their names, asking after their studies and praising them for being trusted with the guarding of the gate--a large responsibility for those in their current junior class.

“Shall we let Hanguang-Jun know you’ve returned?” The one who smiles asks eagerly.

Sizhui shakes his head. “I would like to surprise him, I think,” he says. “Is Senior Wei at home?”

They say they believe that he is and Sizhui is glad.

Cloud Recesses looks the same as ever as he walks towards the Jingshi. It’s a bright spring day and there are new visiting students bustling about near the library and classrooms as Sizhui passes. He knows from Senior Wei and Hanguang-Jun’s frequent letters that Zewu-Jun is not yet out of seclusion, so he does not look for his Uncle. He keeps an eye out for Lan Qiren, but guiltily hopes he does not encounter his elder, lest he be waylaid in his goal to see his fathers first out of everyone--aside from the gatekeepers.

He feels almost as if he is sneaking into his own home and smiles at his ridiculousness. Still, he wants his return to be special for them, as they knew to expect him soon from his last letter, but not precisely when.

However, when he finally comes up the walk to the home he knows both his fathers now share, he finds upon knocking softly that no one is home. He lets out a little sigh, an indulgence as he is weary from his journey, and lets himself into his childhood home.

Sizhui has always loved the Jingshi. He’s always felt it to be a tranquil, safe haven, among the other buildings in Cloud Recesses, some of which can feel cold and spare. He has always felt most himself in Hanguang-jun’s rooms, even when he was living in the boys’ dormitories, or his small shared house with Jingyi for the short time they were senior disciples together before he left with Wen Ning.

Sizhui passes Hanguang-jun’s guqin, laid out on its table and walks through the house and onto the veranda overlooking the garden in the back. He half hopes to find Senior Wei, robes hiked up around his knees in the dirt planting or weeding something or other, as he’s said he loves to in his letters. But, Senior Wei is not there, so Sizhui goes back inside.

He spies a note, written in a messy hand on crumpled talisman paper, that says, *Sweetheart, I’ve gone to Caiyi Town to buy more wine. You have meetings today and, who knows, I might be back before you even see this, but I wouldn’t want you to worry. Anyway, I’ll bring you a surprise!*

Sizhui smiles and sits back on his heels, satisfied he just has to wait for his fathers to return. He idly thinks he could go find Jingyi, but still he decides he would feel better if he sees Senior Wei and Hanguang-jun first no matter what.

So, he sets about waiting.

He removes his boots, dusty and travel-worn as they are and he unpacks his qiankun bag, setting aside his spare clothes for the laundry and placing his small gifts for his fathers on the table next to Senior Wei's note. He takes out his guqin and fiddles with the strings and the tune until it sings perfectly and lays it next to Hanguang-jun's. He decides to bathe, still feeling the dust and wear of the road home.

It's a bit of an affair, flagging down an attendant, requesting the water and some linens. He heats the bath himself with a talisman he's come to know intimately while traveling and spends so long in the tub his fingers wrinkle like an old man's. He smiles, thinking of days when he was small and Hanguang-jun would sit beside the tub and wash Sizhui's hair and keep his hands always in the water to make sure he didn't slip. Then their wrinkled fingers would match. He would smile when Sizhui pressed his wet hands to his father's face, scrunching up his nose and being just a little silly.

Sizhui dries himself, lost in fond memories. He barely thinks about it, wrapping his tired, clean body in one of Hanguang-jun's old robes since all of his are dusty from the road--he sits down on the bed, which is bigger now than he remembers it being when he was small.

He smiles and pats the featherlight mattress and pillows, knowing Hanguang-jun would provide only the best for his beloved. Sizhui glances at the sky. It's late afternoon, so it won't be too long until one or both of his fathers return, but the bath has relaxed him enough his body doesn't want to do anything but sleep. He could send for food, but he was hoping to eat supper as a family. So, he lays down.

The pillows smell of sandalwood and ink and talisman paper. He hears guqin strings echo and sees a crooked smile and swirling dark robes as he drifts into dreams.

Wei Wuxian had a really nice time in Caiyi Town. Not only had the illustrious shopkeeper selling his beloved Emperor's Smile been as friendly as ever, he'd even invited Wei Wuxian to sample a new brew, one that--while not quite as fine as his favorite--went down smooth and warmed his belly nicely.

The walk back up the mountain was tiring in a way that was more satisfying than strenuous and Wei Wuxian's muscles are pleasantly aching as he walks through the Jingshi's doors. As he sets his clutch of bottles and his qiankun bag down next to the table off the main room, he notices a couple of items among his scattered drawings and the note he'd left for Lan Zhan earlier in the day. There's another set of three bottles, red earthenware capped with black wrappings. Next to that is a small, nondescript jar.

Wei Wuxian turns and spies an extra guqin, set carefully next to Lan Zhan's in the music nook. He beams and almost calls loudly for Sizhui to come out from wherever he is hiding.

He cuts himself off with a half-yelp as soon as his eyes fall to the bedroom and Sizhui's slumbering form upon his and Lan Zhan's bed.

"Aiyo, sweet boy," Wei Wuxian murmurs, approaching slowly. "You little sneak."

He sits down on the edge of the bed and draws his finger lightly over Sizhui's bare forehead, where his unbound hair has fallen into his eyes, pulling it back behind his cute little ear. The boy stirred and made a small adorable noise of minor wakefulness. He scrunches his nose and blinks his eyes open blearily at Wei Wuxian.

"Mm," he mumbles. "Xian-gege?"

"I'm here, my little turnip," Wei Wuxian says softly, cupping his son's sleep-warm cheek. "Welcome home."

Sizhui smiles gently and turns his face to Wei Wuxian's hand so his lips brush his open palm. "Didn't mean to be so sleepy," he says, blinking more, shifting wakefully.

"Ah-ah, baobei," Wei Wuxian clucks, playfully drawing his hand up to cover Sizhui's eyes, keeping out the late afternoon sun. "Your Hanguang-jun won't be back for a little while. Let's make of this time what we can."

Sizhui makes a small, questioning noise, still caught half in dreams, as Wei Wuxian pulls off his boots and shrugs out of several of his robes, leaving only the lightest inner layer. He climbs, as coordinated as he can while slightly buzzed and older than he seems, over Sizhui's curled up form. He sighs loudly as he snuggles up to Sizhui's back, making sure to leave space on the other side of the bed.

"Oh, these are his nice robes," he murmurs in Sizhui's ear as he tucks his hair out of the way. "The soft ones."

Sizhui giggles and catches Wei Wuxian's hands as they come around his waist.

"Do you remember, my a-Yuan, when you would sneak into the Demon-Subdue Cave at night and climb upon my bed of stone and curl up right there with me when I couldn't sleep?" Wei Wuxian asks, voice full of fondness, mind drifting through bittersweet memories.

"Mm. Sometimes," Sizhui mumbles. He presses back closer. "Baba, 'm sleepy. Tell me tomorr'w."

"Okay, okay," Wei Wuxian says, barely catching all his words through the pillow, but feeling something settle, coming to rest, deep in his chest. He shuts his eyes and breathes out slowly and lets himself sleep.

Lan Wangji's neck is aching. The three hour long meeting with Sect Leader Ouyang regarding the building up of some roads and bridges near his borders with Qishan had been productive. The obligatory small banquet afterwards with Uncle and young Ouyang Zizhen had been almost pleasant.

But Lan Wangji had had a long day and he misses his Wei Ying, so he is holding some tension in his body. He idly hopes that Wei Ying had decided to eat without him tonight, he's disappointed in himself that he had not stopped the conversation for a moment to send a message that he would need to dine with his guests.

As he leaves the hall, ready to return to the Jingshi and his Wei Ying, Ouyang Zizhen calls to him from behind, pulling ahead of his slower-moving father.

"Hanguang-jun," he calls. Wangji stops to wait for the boy to catch up.

Ouyang Zizhen has grown taller and a little broader about the shoulders in the time since Lan Wangji has last seen him. His face is still open and guileless as ever. Lan Wangji feels cheered by that. He does not wish this younger generation to grow up any faster than they please. He relishes seeing their enthusiasm and love for each other blossom.

"How can I help you, Young Master Ouyang?"

Ouyang Zizhen blushes, as he nearly always does when Lan Wangji speaks to him. He doesn't pretend to have any idea if it is due to the young master's awe of the great Hanguang-jun or some latent crush the boy holds for him. He knows both are possible. He'll treat him the same regardless.

He also knows the boy reacts almost exactly the same way to Wei Ying, which is only right.

"Hanguang-jun, I was wondering if you had any word of Lan Sizhui's return to Cloud Recesses. I had thought, perhaps if a letter from him missed us in Baling, when we arrived he might be here."

Lan Wangji feels for young Ouyang Zizhen. He too misses his son. "We received word that he would return soon in his last letter. But not when." Lan Wangji pauses, looks steadily at his son's dear friend and takes a very small leap. "Wei Ying thinks he has taken the opportunity of his long time away to become...mysterious and inscrutable."

Ouyang Zizhen's eyes widen and his expression breaks into an amused grin. "*Sizhui*?" He laughs. "I don't know about that, Hanguang-jun."

Lan Wangji inclines his head in acknowledgement. "My own thoughts on the matter lean towards his intention to surprise us upon his return."

"Yes, that sounds much more like him," Ouyang Zizhen replies, still smiling. "Will you tell him I asked after him? It's been so long, you know?"

Lan Wangji does, so he nods, inclines his head again to the boy's polite bow and goes on his way.

He spies Lan Jingyi across the courtyard, looking overly surreptitious as he walks extremely quickly towards the guest quarters. Lan Wangji will not expose him for wanting to see his friend, especially as he has been so obviously lonely without Sizhui for close companionship.

He averts his eyes when Lan Jingyi passes, huffing and puffing. He feels a surge of warmth for the boy, whose irrepressible honor, humor, and wit all remind him of his Wei Ying when he was young. Though Lan Jingyi is not nearly so determinedly mischievous. No, Lan Jingyi desperately wants to follow the rules and finds he can't. Wei Ying just never cared enough to bother.

Lan Wangji finds himself more attracted to the latter, but still appreciative of the former. The Lan rules are rarely forgiving but Lan Wangji has always strived to be so for young Jingyi. His tremendous effort to follow them has also bestowed upon him an astounding resiliency that Lan Wangji is certain will only continue to grow and inspire the sect.

Now, Lan Wangji rounds the bend, leaving Jingyi behind him, to return to the Jingshi and to his Wei Ying. Though the sky is darkening, he finds no lamps or candles lit, as Wei Ying generally does to continue his reading or his work late into the evening.

He opens the door quietly and walks to the table, searching for the note Wei Ying has most certainly left for him. He sees it immediately but also notices some items placed nearby that were not there this morning. Wei Ying's new bottles of Emperor's Smile stand out next to his qiankun bag, but so too do a handful of unfamiliar bottles tied together next to a jar of the specific type of guqin polish that Lan Wangji likes for *Wangji*. It is produced only in the mountains of Qishan.

Lan Wangji turns to the music nook to find Sizhui's qin resting safely next to *Wangji* and he smiles. He hears a light snoring from the direction of their bed and knows that Wei Ying has been drinking with the wine-maker again.

Lan Wangji doesn't mind. The townspeople of Caiyi love Wei Ying, having less reason to connect his name to the title and reputation that the Yiling Patriarch holds in Yiling or Yungmeng or Lanling. Lan Wangji is of the opinion that everyone should love Wei Ying, so when people do, he tries to encourage further connection.

He turns to the bedroom and pauses, taking a moment to stare at his beautiful boy, quietly sleeping, who he has not seen in over a year. Long enough for him to grow further into himself, to become even more strong and good, as his letters have made so plain that he has.

It has been beyond joyful to share with Wei Ying his memories of raising a-Yuan, but Lan Wangji feels he can hardly contain the happiness overflowing within him now that he and Wei Ying and Sizhui can be together in one place for a time. A family.

He stands and slips out of his heavy brocade outer robe, as necessity for dealings with a Sect Leader. Lan Wangji smiles again as Wei Ying continues to snore, snuggled close behind a-Yuan. As he comes close enough to see, he notes that his son is wearing one of his own older robes, one worn often when a-Yuan was a child and would still sit wrapped in his arms for a short time before returning to the disciples quarters at bedtime.

He knows the fabric is worn soft and slightly frayed at the sleeves, but Lan Wangji does not like to waste and has a hard time letting things go. So he keeps it in a drawer for evenings when he does not want to be seen by anyone other than Wei Ying or perhaps Brother. He keeps it too for when he wakes early to commune with the rabbits before the very excitable

junior disciple who has come up in the rotation everyone thinks he doesn't know about arrives to feed them.

He feels glad that Sizhui recognizes the garment in a way that clearly brings comfort to him as well.

Lan Wangji comes to the edge of the bed where he can tell Wei Ying has generously left room for him to lie down with them and eases himself next to and then under a-Yuan's heavy sleeping form. He thinks all the while of when his beautiful boy was still small enough to lift with little effort.

"Mmn," a-Yuan mumbles as Lan Wangji lays his son's head upon his lap and begins to card his fingers through his unbound hair.

"I'm here," Lan Wangji says softly. "And so are you, baobei."

A-Yuan snuggles closer. "Mm, a-Die, Baba is loud," he whines delicately. Lan Wangji closes his eyes to the fullness he feels in his chest.

"Yes, my heart, but we love him anyway," he answers.

A-Yuan nods gently and tightens his hands on a fold of Lan Wangji's robe. "Twist my hair?" He asks, sighing.

Lan Wangji happily obliges. It is something a-Yuan used to ask for when he was small and could not sleep. When he was first here in the Jingshi with Lan Wangji he would pout and say, "Not like that, gege. Here," pointing to his head. And he would say, "Harder. It's okay." And Lan Wangji could only do as he asked. When a-Yuan was a little older, upon inquiry, he told Lan Wangji that the gently pulling sensation of the motion relaxes him.

After some time taking small sections of a-Yuan's hair at the root and twisting it around his fingers several times, only to let go and repeat the process all through his hair, with Wei Ying still soundly asleep, Lan Wangji asks, "Did Baba do this for you when you lived with him?" He had always wondered, but could not ask.

"Mm," a-Yuan hums. "I think so." He turns in Lan Wangji's lap, all warm breath and soft, lazy smile. He blinks sleepily up at Lan Wangji and says, low enough not to wake Wei Ying, "Talking so much with Wen-gongzi on the road, this one remembered when he first met a-Die."

Lan Wangji blinks in surprise, but a smile quickly overtakes his expression. "Did you?" He asks, continuing to twist a-Yuan's hair.

"Mn," he replies. "You were bigger than now, but smaller too," his voice, light and airy, has taken on a dreamy musical tone. "And the only time you stopped looking at Baba was when you looked at me."

Lan Wangji finds he has no words in his mouth, so he continues to twist a-Yuan's hair. "Mn," he returns finally and a-Yuan huffs a silent laugh.

He turns his face to rub against the fabric of Lan Wangji's robes and says, "Missed you."

"And I you, baobei." They sit in comfortable silence for a while, and Lan Wangji waits for his son's breath to even out again as he falls back into slumber. When that doesn't happen, he asks quietly, "Did Baba get you something to eat?"

A-Yuan shakes his head. "Wanted to wait for you."

Lan Wangji feels a sharp pang of guilt, but knows there wasn't anything to be done. "I dined with Uncle, Sect Leader Ouyang, and his son."

A-Yuan frowns in confusion. "Zizhen is here?" He stiffens slightly as if he's going to get up. "Should I--

"Hush," Lan Wangji soothes. "A-Yuan should do as he pleases. Young Master Zizhen is staying the night. You may see him in the morning." He does not say he wishes a-Yuan to be only with him and Wei Ying just for tonight, but there is still understanding in a-Yuan's sudden smile.

"Mn," he says and relaxes again.

"Oh good," Wei Ying's voice emerges from where his face is pressed against a-Yuan's back. "I thought I was about to lose my very excellent pillow." There is laughter in his voice as he adds, "Lan Zhan always saves me."

A-Yuan huffs another laugh and turns his face to press into Lan Wangji's lap.

Lan Wangji turns to his beloved and asks, "Did Wei Ying not eat before his nap either?"

Wei Ying sits up but keeps his legs still pressed against a-Yuan's, staying close. He is gracefully disheveled. His hair is falling gloriously from his ponytail. He looks at Lan Wangji and smiles sheepishly. "Ah, does lunch count? Peanuts with my friends in Caiyi?"

Lan Wangji makes his expression look mildly disapproving. "The hour is too late to send for supper. I will go and get you both something to eat from the kitchens."

Wei Ying sits up even further, which is not what Lan Wangji intended. "Ah, Lan Zhan. No need. I'll go. I just had such a nice rest with our baby. You should stay and--"

He stops speaking when a-Yuan reaches out to catch his sleeve as he moves to climb back over both a-Yuan and Lan Wangji. "Baba," a-Yuan says quietly. "Stay with us."

Lan Wangji watches with satisfaction as Wei Ying's resolve melts. He flops back down upon the mattress, now spread across the foot of the bed. "Aiyo, all right. If you insist, baobei." He frowns delicately, his expression fluttering quickly as whatever idea he has sprints from his quick mind to his quicker mouth. "Ah! My surprise! We can eat my surprise!"

A-Yuan does not let go of Wei Ying's sleeve, apparently not confident he won't go sprinting off if unleashed. Lan Wangji believes this to be wise. "Surprise?" Their son asks curiously.

“Yes,” Wei Ying says, pleased with himself, and moves again to get up from the bed.

A-Yuan doesn't let him go. “*Baba*,” he says more insistently. “Stay here.”

A peculiar expression comes over Wei Ying's face and Lan Wangji wonders if he'd been thinking so furiously when a-Yuan had called him that name the first time he hadn't quite processed it.

Wei Ying's place in a-Yuan's heart as his father had been something he shared with Lan Wangji in private letters not so long after he began his journey. Lan Wangji remembers reading a-Yuan's fine calligraphy with tears in his eyes when he wrote, *Do you think Senior Wei would mind if, when we are in private, I began to call him Baba? I have been told and remember a little now that is how he was with me when I was small and I wish to honor him.*

He had replied immediately that he thought it was a fine idea and that Wei Ying would be very happy. It seems that he is so happy, now that he has allowed himself to sit and listen and think about it, that he has been rendered speechless. He stares at A-Yuan and smiles, slowly, so beautiful, then whispers, “Yes, Baba will stay.”

“I will fetch the surprise,” Lan Wangji intones, slipping from the bed as his beloved and their son embrace, tearfully. He is back in a moment with Wei Ying's qiankun bag in his hand. “Here, Wei Ying?” he asks, his expression soft as Wei Ying furiously wipes at his eyes.

“Yes, go ahead. I bought them for you. Will you share with these lowly beggars, O great Hanguang-jun?” Wei Ying pouts prettily.

“I will always share with Wei Ying,” Lan Wangji replies, opening the bag. “And with a-Yuan.” He reaches in and pulls out a small basket of golden ripe loquats. He looks up at Wei Ying, whose pout has transformed into a nostalgic grin.

A-Yuan looks between them, perhaps suspecting correctly this is a private joke. “Thank you, a-Die,” he says, so Lan Wangji hands him a fruit. He holds it up to his face and smells it appreciatively.

“Such a sweet boy we have raised,” Wei Ying says, looking fondly at a-Yuan. He reaches out and tugs playfully on the end of his hair as he adds, “Even if he has become much too sneaky while he was away.”

“Not sneaky,” Lan Wangji finds himself compelled to say, though he knows Wei Ying is only joking. He tosses a loquat at Wei Ying and relishes the delighted surprise on his face as he reacts just fast enough to catch it.

A-Yuan has already bitten into the ripe fruit. He keeps his eyes on it as he leans back into Lan Wangji's side, snuggling close again. “I just knew if I told everyone I was coming, *everyone* would want to see me. And I wanted to see you both first. Just...our family.”

Lan Wangji fixes Wei Ying with a very direct look until he laughs and crawls back up the bed to slot himself in on a-Yuan's other side. “A-Die is right, of course. Not sneaky. A very good turnip. The best, even. The most delicious.”

A-Yuan giggles. Lan Wangji hasn't heard him make that noise in a long span of years. He finds himself smiling as he bites into his own loquat. The fresh juice and tangy flesh burst across his tongue, bringing back memories, but also a taste of good things to come.

After they eat three loquats each, a-Yuan will lean his head against Lan Wangji's shoulder and fall asleep again. Wei Ying will smile softly and reach for Lan Wangji's hand where it rests against a-Yuan's side. They will not speak, for fear of waking him, and so drift into slumber together, holding him close.

In the morning Lan Wangji will wake first, but not move until a-Yuan stirs at the prescribed hour of rising. They will leave the bed carefully, so as not to wake Wei Ying and polish their guqins before breakfast arrives. Lan Jingyi and Ouyang Zizhen will appear close behind and they will try and fail to obscure their illicit hangovers. Lan Wangji will say nothing on the matter, and Wei Ying, upon waking to the smell of food and noticing their pale faces, will speak very loudly about how pleased he is that a-Yuan has come home.

That, Lan Wangji will agree with whole-heartedly.

End Notes

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